DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 297 RC 014 475

AUTHOR Barker, Bruce O.; Muse, Ivan D.
TITLE A Research Report of Small/Rural School Districts In North Dakota Compared to School Districts of Similiar Size Nationwide.
PUB DATE 17 Nov 83
NOTE 9p.; For related documents, see ED 228 013, ED 231 573, ED 231 583, and RC 014 470-479.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTOPS *Academic Achievement; Athletics; Comparative Analysis; *Curriculum; Declining Enrollment; Educational Finance; Educational Resources; Elementary Secondary Education; Profiles; *School Districts; School Size; *Small Schools; State Surveys; Student Teacher Ratio; *Superintendents; *Teachers; Teacher Salaries; Transportation
IDENTIFIERS *North Dakota

ABSTRACT

The study compared nationwide research findings about the districts, superintendents, teachers, programs, and student performance in 642 public school districts with an enrollment of 900 or less (defined as small/rural) to data from a random sample of school districts of similar size in North Dakota. Data were collected from superintendents by questionnaire during the 1982-83 school year. Twenty-nine of North Dakota's 216 small/rural school districts, or 74.4% of those surveyed, responded. North Dakota small/rural school districts averaged 228 students with 116.2 students per school, both figures less than national averages. The last bond issue averaged $212,125 compared to $716,000 nationally, and 62.1% of the districts reported declining enrollments compared to 36.2% nationally. While 55.4% of the superintendents surveyed nationally held master's degrees, over 96% of North Dakota small school superintendents held master's degrees. None held education specialists degrees, compared to 31.5% nationally. Although most North Dakota superintendents held full-time positions, their salaries were lower than national figures. Teacher/student ratios matched the national averages and teacher salaries and duties also compared favorably. Graduating seniors exhibited high academic achievement in North Dakota. Nearly half went on to college, compared to 38.6% nationally. School programs compared favorably in the areas of curriculum and resource personnel but less so in the area of sports programs. (SB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED237297

A RESEARCH REPORT OF SMALL/RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NORTH DAKOTA COMPARED TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF SIMILIAR SIZE NATIONWIDE

A Report Prepared for the
North Dakota State Department of Public Instruction
November 17, 1983

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Bruce O. Barker
Ivan D. Muse
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

by
Dr. Bruce O. Barker
Program Administrator
Division of Continuing Education

Dr. Ivan D. Muse
Professor of Education
College of Education

Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah 84602

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

RC014475

North Dakota

A descriptive report of K-12 public school districts in North Dakota enrolling 900 students or less compared to nationwide research findings for rural school districts of similiar size. Twenty-nine districts were surveyed in North Dakota; 642 districts were surveyed in the national study.

The study gathered data related to the rural district, the school superintendent, the teachers, school programs, and student performance. Data was collected during the 1982-83 school year.

A RESEARCH REPORT OF SMALL/RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NORTH DAKOTA COMPARED TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF SIMILAR SIZE NATIONWIDE

by
Bruce O. Barker and Ivan D. Muse

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, comparatively few educators have taken an interest in the strengths and challenges of America's small/rural schools, despite the fact that almost one-third of America's youngsters attend schools classified as rural (REA News, 1982). With the decline in school consolidation and the current population shift to non-metropolitan areas (Beal, 1975), it is clearly evident that rural schools will continue to play a significant role in the future educational development of a large segment of our society. Currently, very little data are available about rural school systems in our society. This is particularly true of K-12 systems enrolling less than 1,000 students (Nachtigal, 1979).

The purpose of this report is to present major findings of K-12 rural school districts in North Dakota with those of a nationwide study completed by Barker (1983), in which descriptive data were collected on K-12 and/or 1-12 rural school systems enrolling 900 students or less. The findings were gathered during the 1982-83 academic year.

METHOD

Using the Education Directory, Fall 1980: Local Education Agencies as a reference, a hand count was made of all K-12 and 1-12 public school districts in the United States which enroll 900 students or less. Of the nation's 15,601 public districts, 4,125 (26.4 percent) were identified as qualifying K-12 or 1-12 systems. In North Dakota, 216 qualifying districts were identified. These districts represented 66.3 percent of the state's 326

public school districts and enrolled 57,048 students.

Questionnaires were mailed to superintendents of 816 randomly selected districts in the nationwide study. Completed questionnaires were returned from 642 districts (78.7 percent). The same questionnaire was mailed to 39 districts in North Dakota, of which 29 responded (74.4 percent). The questionnaire posed questions related to the rural district, the school superintendent, the teachers, school programs and student performance.

FINDINGS

A comparison of the major findings in North Dakota with those of the national study are reported in Table 1.

CONCLUSION

North Dakota is one of the leading states in the nation in relation to the number of rural districts which make up the state's public school system. It is clearly evident that the operation and management of the small/rural district poses challenges and rewards, in many ways, uniquely different from those of a large urban district, and even many larger rural districts. It is hoped that the information presented herein will assist North Dakota educators, and others interested in education, to more knowledgeably enhance the strengths and address the needs of the small/rural districts within the state.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NORTH DAKOTA AND THOSE NATIONWIDE, ENROLLING 900 STUDENTS OR LESS. 1983.

Variable	North Dakota	Nation
The Rural District		
1. Average student enrollment per district	228	436
2. Average number of schools per district	1.7	2.4
3. Average student enrollment per school	116.2	188.5
4. Average geographical size of district in square miles	232	245
5. Percent of student's bussed to school	67.5	64.4
6. Mean farthest one-way distance students bussed (miles)	23.4	19.0
7. Percent of districts reporting receipt of state aid or funding for small school districts	29.6	24.2
8. Average dollar amount of last bond issue	$212,125	$716,000
9. Percent of districts passing last bond issue	93.1	87.5
10. Percent of districts reporting declining enrollments	62.1	36.2
The Superintendent		
1. Average age of superintendent	42.7	47.1
2. Percent of superintendents holding master's as highest degree	96.6	55.4
3. Percent of superintendents holding Ed. Specialist degree	0	31.5
4. Percent of superintendents holding doctorate degree	3.4	13.1
5. Average tenure as superintendent (years)	5.6	8.5
6. Percent of superintendents reporting annual salary in excess of $35,000	24.1	37.4
7. Percent of full-time superintendents	96.6	75.8
8. Percent of superintendent/principal combinations	3.4	20.9
9. Percent of superintendents who worked for district prior to appointment as superintendent	13.8	29.4
The Teachers		
1. Average number of elementary teachers in district	7.3	14.4
2. Average number of secondary teachers in district	9.3	15.7
3. Average teacher/student ratio	1:13.7	1:14.5
4. Percent teacher turnover (1982-83)	8.9	8.6
5. Mean beginning teacher salary (1982-83)	$13,211	$12,492
6. Mean top teacher salary (1982-83)	$19,226	$20,506
7. Mean current teacher salary (1982-83)	$16,013	$16,377

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	North Dakota	Nation
8. Average number of "steps" to reach top of salary schedule	11.1	14.5
9. Average number of different subject preparations for secondary teachers	3.9	3.5
Student Performance		
1. Mean number of graduating seniors	22.2	34.5
2. Percent of graduating seniors recognized as National Merit Exam Finalists	2.6	1.0
3. Percent of graduating seniors achieving scores of 25 or above on American College Test (ACT Exam)	19.0	7.5
4. Percent of graduating seniors achieving scores of 1100 or above on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT Exam)	2.8	2.6
5. Percent of graduating seniors going on to college	49.7	38.6
6. Percent of graduating seniors going to technical school	21.8	14.1
School Programs		
1. Percent of districts exploying either full or part-time, the following resource personnel:		
Special Education	85.7	86.6
School Counselor	53.6	79.4
School Psychologist	21.4	33.8
School Nurse	7.1	45.1
Librarian/Media Specialist	67.9	80.9
Adult Education Director	3.6	22.0
Community Education Director	0	7.8
Vocational Education Director	21.4	22.0
2. Percent of districts offering the following sports programs:		
Football	58.6	69.2
Basketball	100	100
Baseball	31.0	55.4
Softball	10.3	37.1
Volleyball	17.2	65.7
Cross Country Track	13.8	23.3
Soccer	0	7.0
Wrestling	10.3	25.2
Track and Field	89.7	78.7
Golf	20.7	22.4
Tennis	0	16.3
Swimming	0	3.2
Gymnastics	3.4	5.9

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	North Dakota	Nation
3. Percent of districts offering the following courses as a part of their curriculum:		
Spanish	0	41.8
German	11.1	9.7
French	14.8	18.9
Calculus	33.3	35.9
Chemistry	81.5	79.4
Computer Science	70.4	60.3
Electronics	7.4	13.0
Vocational Agriculture	55.6	63.1
Physics	74.1	67.7

Bibliography

Barker, Bruce O. "A Descriptive Study of K-12 and 1-12 Rural School Systems in the United States." Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. 1983.

Beal, Calvin L. The Revival of Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan America. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.

Nachtigal, Paul. Improving Education in Rural America: Past Efforts, Future Opportunities. Accepting Reality: An Agenda for the Future Improvement for Rural Education. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education. December 1979. ERIC Document ED 196-635.

"Research Focuses on Problems of Rural Schools." Rural Education News, Volume 32:4, Fall 1982, 4-5.

U.S. Department of Education. Education Director, Fall 1980: Local Education Agencies. by Jeffrey W. Williams and Warren A. Hughes. National Center for Education Statistics. Washingtor, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1980.